

Staff Spotlight: Sarah VanDelfzijl

Sarah VanDelfzijl, an Environmental Quality Analyst in the DEQ's Kalamazoo District Office, is an example of the commitment DEQ staff have to bettering Michigan's environment both on and off their job. Sarah recently became President of the Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), a nonprofit organization supporting conservation professionals and advocating for science based conservation practices, programs, and policy.

Sarah received her bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. After graduating, she began working as the Watershed Coordinator for the Rocky River Watershed Project in St. Joseph, Cass, Kalamazoo and Van Buren counties. It was there that she learned about SWCS, and her co-workers encouraged her to get involved.

"Working at a Conservation District on a watershed planning grant helped me build valuable professional relationships with other environmental professionals in the area," Sarah said. "This was also how I was first introduced to SWCS."

Sarah has been a member of the SWCS for three years, and she says her enthusiasm for environmental issues is what kept her involved in causes outside of her DEQ work.

"I really have a passion for conservation and natural resources," Sarah said. "SWCS is an outlet for me to continue learning from other resource professionals."

As President of the SWCS, Sarah holds most of the responsibilities of the executive committee. She is in charge of running meetings, setting agendas and making sure the committee stays on task.

Sarah's presidency is a voluntary position. She spends 10-15 hours per week on SWCS activities. "Part of it is that I really enjoy it," she says. "But I also believe that you get what you put in."